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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001031

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C
DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS USDA - MARY CHAMBLISS
PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER AND USDA ATTACHE

FROM BRAZZAVILLE EMBASSY OFFICE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [CF](#)

SUBJECT: CONGO/B: Reclamma for Loss of Crucial USDA Food
for Education Funding

REF A: KINSHASA 00697

REF B: 04 KINSHASA 00076

REF C: Sanders-to-Chambliss 4/14/05 email

1. Post understands that recipient countries for USDA's 2005 Food for Education program have been selected and, that Republic of Congo (ROC) is not slated to receive funding or have its program renewed (Ref A). The Embassy would again like to submit as a reclamma the importance of this program for the Republic of Congo (as it did last year, Ref B). In addition, it has come to post's attention that important key indicators used by USDA to make funding decisions may be based on pre-civil war data (from the late 1990s) which is no longer accurate. The current post-conflict situation in Congo is accurately reflected in paragraph 3. The Embassy strongly supports this program and would like to request that USDA reconsider ROC for the 2005 selection, or if that is not possible, we would hope that ROC would be on the list for any end of the year or unprogrammed funds.

2. The USDA Food for Education (FFE) Program has been critical in addressing education issues all over the country stemming from six years of civil conflict from 1997 to 2001. It is one of the major bilateral assistance programs between the U.S. and ROC. Congo/B is a post conflict country with dire education needs. The program reaches more than 5,000 children, including at-risk groups like pygmies. In addition, a recently jointly launched USDA-African Education Initiative (AEI) program aimed at establishing gardening projects in schools had anticipated working off the synergies of FFE. Ultimately the goal is to help provide food security that could eventually reduce or even eliminate the need for direct food assistance programs to the target population. The lack of FFE program not only puts at risk the gains already made, but threatens the effectiveness of this new USDA-AEI program.

3. Post would like to submit several updated statistics or on-the-ground estimates to provide a more current and accurate post-conflict picture of the need for this program in the Republic of Congo. Current data on the program criteria listed below are:

A. Per capita income below \$2,000 - the World Bank reported a figure of \$650 in 2003.

B. Net food importer - latest UN World Food Program data indicate that Congo/B is a net food importing country, with food imports accounting for as much of 30 percent of total annual imports.

C. Prevalence of undernourishment among the population greater than 20 percent - A 2000 FAO report cites 1995-97 data that 34 percent of the population is undernourished. It should be noted that these data predate the 1997-1999 war period and the current post-conflict environment and therefore one would expect that the figure is higher at the present.

D. Free from conflict that would impede implementation - Congo/B is a post-conflict country that has made significant strides in the last two years, so much so that it recently obtained an IMF Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF). The current FFE project has not/not suffered implementation problems and future programs would only enhance progress and development.

E. Government support for education - The government is very supportive of education programs and has worked very cooperatively with the Embassy and NGO communities on improving the condition of education in the country. There is also a focus on education in the national strategy planned under the PRGF.

F. Adult female literacy rate below 65 percent - The adult literacy rate is not currently known but best post, local NGO, and international organization estimates, cited in the 2004 Human Rights Report, give a figure of about 40 percent for all adults. The rate for women would be

predicted to be still lower, at about 25 to 30 percent. The sharp decline from earlier relatively high literacy rates is due to widespread destruction of the educational system during the 1990s civil wars.

1G. Primary education completion rate below 65 percent - World Bank's figure for 2002 is 47.2 percent. It would be expected that the figure is probably somewhat worse than that figure at present, even though some positive trends are beginning to be observed in attendance and completion at the primary school level. The FFE has played a key role in improving this figure slightly and future FFE funding could help continue this upward trend.

1H. Rate of underweight children at least 20 percent - though there is no national data that post could find on this measure, the UN World Food Program has some figures from the 1995-97 for several regions that vary from 17 percent to almost 40 percent. Post believes that the situation has only worsened since that period and that any national figure, if it were available, would be at a working level of at least 20 percent.

14. Embassy Brazzaville appreciates all the support over the last 2 years by USDA and would like to request that USDA reconsider its decision, and renew IPHD's funding for the Food for Education Program or consider any fallout funds.

15. Brazzaville Embassy Office - Sanders
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